December 8, 1954

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
College of Agriculture
The University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Joshua:

It was good to have your invigorating letter.

If you throw as many questions at a student and do as much to stimulate him, I don't see how he ever gets out of the Graduate School at Wisconsin!

I started to write an explicit reply to your queries about promotion, design, etc., and decided that I should instead write a book. Alas, I haven't time to do so, especially since I haven't all the answers myself yet. Therefore, it has occurred to me that since you are not in any special hurry to conclude arrangements on this book--and we are not, either--I might find that you are coming to the meeting of the Experimental Biologists here in the Bay Area early in April. If you are, let's talk at that time about all the items involved. Let me know if I can count on that visit, will you?

Now as to your remarks about your expository skills and limitations: You are psychic in having sensed what I had heard about your writing, although you were wrong in guessing why I wrote to you as I did about our hope that you will polish the presentation of this book. We had indeed heard from many people that your scientific writing is not the most graceful and interesting of expository styles; some of those who so commented on your writing bluntly stated that you are a poor writer. However, we had also heard more comments to the effect that--as you write to me now--you seem to choose your writing style in accordance with your reader. In short, for all the criticism of your technical writing that we had heard, we have received more praise for your ability to write well when you set out to do so. It was my intent in my letter to convey to you the idea that this little book will call for your putting on the hat you wear when you are not writing a technical abstract.

Sincerely yours,

*Bill*

WHF:mc